

**Interview with Carl Coan, Jr.
conducted by Linda Byrne for the
Providence District History Project Providence Perspective**

Linda: Today is May 28, 2008 – I am Linda Byrne and I am sitting in the offices of Supervisor Linda Smyth with Carl Coan Jr.; the purpose is for an interview for the Providence Perspective. Good morning Carl.

Carl: Good morning.

Linda: Let's start with your childhood, growing up and how you came to Fairfax County.

Carl: Well, I moved here end of June 1942. I was 7 years old came down from Philadelphia where I was born. I moved into Falls Church which was then a full part of Fairfax County. It was a town not a city at that time and I grew up there; and lived there until I graduated from college in 1954 and went off to the army. Came back here to Fairfax when I got out of the army, for 2 years moved to Arlington for 5 years and then moved back here in 1964 and here I have been ever since.

Falls Church when I came here was a – I guess you would call it a true one horse town. My recollection is we had 2 paved streets, Lee Highway and Broad Street. Most of the other streets were dirt with stone; and in the summertime they would put ground up oyster shells down to keep the dust down. We use to ride our bikes along with a rope tied behind them to stir up the dust. I guess not to the pleasure of the people that lived along the streets (laughing). But my understanding is that Falls Church had about a little over two thousand people and the whole Fairfax County had somewhere between forty and fifty thousand people at that time. Most of the area was undeveloped. In Falls Church itself several of my neighbors had horses and chickens. I had a dog once that I got rid of because he ate the neighbor's chickens.

Linda: Oh my.

Carl: There were a few cows in town. Ah, outside of town there was nothing but woods and fields. And everything, and then all of a sudden we had the end of the Second World War. Where I had lived on Broad Street in the center of town with my three quarters of an acre of land there – I cut the grass by hand until after the War when my father got me a power mower. We had a farm across the street from us which all of a sudden became what was known then as Tyler Gardens it is now Winter Hill. They build 482 apartment units. I know that because I managed the place for a while when I was in law school many years later. And that changed the whole perspective of Falls Church. Similar developments were springing up all over the place.

Out here where this office is – I remember painting a barn out here when I was in college – standing on a ladder about 60 feet up in the air – scared to death. I was reaching up with a long white wash brush to white wash the brush – maybe within a block or two of here. Nothing else was there – there were a few houses here along Cedar Lane and then right along there between Arlington Boulevard and Lee Highway, there were some houses. They are still there most of them; but otherwise there wasn't much out here. This was all farmland along here. Actually there wasn't any Boulevard until after the war. Route 50, Lee Boulevard it ended at Seven Corners and there was no over passes or under passes there at the time there was no shopping center; there was a couple gas stations and one of them had a radio station on the top second floor above the bays. WFAX, I appeared on programs several times when I was in school. That building may still be there but it's not a radio station I don't think anymore. WFAX changed over the years I'm not even sure it's still around. I like most people don't listen much to AM radio I suspect. In fact I listen to FM most of the time.

This whole Province well it was country. It also was a different area in many ways then it is now because much of it was – well it was the Falls Church Magisterial District. It embraced Falls Church, Annandale and Providence was really more out – I believe – I'm trying to recollect now – more towards Vienna. Now of course it surrounds Falls Church and it

includes Vienna and goes up to Tyson's and sort of wanders off several places around.

The thing I noted when I was on the Planning Commission was that the main roads now were the main roads then in many ways. Route 123, Lee Highway, Route 7, even Route 50 after it was extended after the war. Those were all – they were there then and they are there now. They are unfortunately our principle routes of movement around. I had differences with some of the citizens and sometimes the supervisor when I was on the Planning Commission – as to what was known as cut through traffic. I use to try to open up traffic roads between subdivisions so the people could get from here to there without going out on the main road. I didn't succeed as often as I would have like to have succeeded.

Linda: What years were you on the Planning Commission?

Carl: 1975 to 1979 no 1995 to 1999 I'm sorry. And then I was on the Housing Authority Redevelopment Housing Authority in 1975 for 11 years 1986. I use to think it was 1985 but it was 1986 I think, I don't know.

Linda: Going back to the schools you mentioned schools what were the public schools like here.

Carl: I went to parochial schools; I went to St. James which was in Falls Church. They recently celebrated their hundredth anniversary and I chaired, I emceed the celebration. The public schools were not famed for their standards, educational standards. Many people a generation or a year or two older when they went to high school they went into Washington, D.C., I went into Washington, D.C., also to Gonzaga a Jesuit school. But I had friends whose older brothers and sisters went into Wilson for instance north of Georgetown in Washington and other schools – no not Wilson it wasn't Wilson – Western, Western High School. It's now the Duke Ellington School for the Arts, High School for the Arts in D.C. They were not renowned for their ability but I think that changed significantly. I don't feel comfortable talking about the schools to much because I didn't go to them

and my children, only went, a couple of them only went there for kindergarten.

Linda: Now your own education – you went on to college.

Carl: I went to Georgetown College and went to Georgetown Law School with the army in between. This is something that doesn't occur that much these days.

Linda: No.

Carl: Um the um – I can ramble on and on I'm not sure where you want me to ramble to.

Linda: Well, some of the changes that you have seen – I guess we had a lot of dairy farms around World War II that were supplying milk into D.C., at that time.

Carl: Yeah, we had a railroad, the Washington and Old Dominion Railroad – ran from Roslyn through Arlington through Falls Church on out to Herndon and Purcellville.

We more than once jumped on cars that went through either east Falls Church or west Falls Church and rode to the other end of town. We all survived fortunately. But that railroad stayed in place until 1966 or so because it was still running when I moved back into Fairfax County in 1964. When I had lived in Arlington it ran across the street from me. When I moved back into Fairfax in the Falls Hill Subdivision just outside of west Falls Church it was about a block and a half from me. When I grew up in Falls Church it was a couple of blocks, 3 blocks away from where I lived. It was sort of my history – my experience growing up into my younger adulthood. It was terminated because the State bought it up in order to do away with a grade crossing on Shirley Highway down near Shirlington. And also it then became the right of way for Route 66 that was, it was not, that was planned before the railroad terminated. That was only within the

Arlington portion of it, they had thought about running it out to Fairfax County on I66 that is but for a variety of reasons that did not occur so it's interesting cause in my neighborhood of Falls Hill where the bike path is now; the houses that back onto the bike path have very large rear yards to make a provision for the highway – was anticipated coming through there. And that never came through; it came through on the other side of the community.

Linda: Tell me about your career.

Carl: Well, I'm a lawyer it's been 50 years come September. I went to work for the Federal Housing Administration thinking it would be a temporary position until I found something in private life but I stayed there for 11 years. That became part of Housing and Redevelopment.

And then went to the National Association of Home Builders and for 2 years was their vice president for government affairs and then went into private practice in 1977.

This practice all along has been involved with housing related matters. I think I am the senior full time practicing housing lawyer in the Country now. There are older lawyers who, but they're semi retired or fully retired. I, for better or worse am still going. But that's been my whole career and that what led me to take the offer of Jim Scott to go on the housing the Redevelopment Housing Authority, against my wife's better judgment. Because I had after serving on the Public Utilities then the Public Consumer Protection Commission for seven years and withdrawing because of the time constraints. I took the opportunity when Jim Scott offered to me to go on the redevelopment housing Authority because that's where my whole life had been involved around housing issues.

Linda: Now Jim Scott was then Providence District Supervisor?

Carl: He was Providence district Supervisor – yes. We were and are good friends. We practically tossed a coin as to who was going to run in 1971. He ran and I didn't; but I had five children, he had no children. He hadn't

gotten married yet, so life was a little simpler for him then to make that kind of decision than for me at the time; in fact I went to my then boss the Executive Vice President of the National Association of Home Builders and said is it all right if I run and he said it is but you can find a new job if you win. That sort of helped me make my decision not to compete for the seat.

Linda: Now your 5 children; one is in practice with you?

Carl: Two of them, myself, my son Carl the third and my only daughter Sheila. Carl the third also served on the Redevelopment Housing Authority for 4 years until his, from Providence, as the Providence representative. And they bought a house out in the western part of the County and when his term was up he had to, it was the wrong political party for the representative for the Supervisor in that part of the County, Sully District. And there was somebody from there as well. He's in practice with me; he's the litigator in our firm.

My daughter Sheila, she's been with us for over 20 years now, almost 20 years. She's our fair housing expert and occupancy specialist. Among the things I've done in my life is help work on the original Fair Housing Act at HUD in 1967, 1968. So I am proud that my daughter has, probably with a little pushing from me, she has become the firm's expert in that area. We do representation of Fair Housing on both sides; both for owners and for tenants for complainants all around the country.

But housing programs has really been my – what I've done all of my life. Not that I haven't done other things but - you pull together a series of things that I've done. I've served on boards and other things here in the County and the State and they are all in some way oriented toward housing when the consumer protection aspect added to the Public Utilities Commission in I guess 1972, 1972; one of the major pushers for that was the feeling amongst many residents of Fairfax that there was shoddy building occurring.

New home builders were passing off product that really wasn't very good and that was a problem in the industry. I don't think it is as much a problem now as it was then.

I helped spur the development of, when I was at the National Association of Home Builders of a program of insurance to protect home buyers called the Homeowners Warranty Program and my premise to my lawyers was that well if we didn't do it the Congress would do it for you. So that aspect of – that became a major portion of the Consumer Protection Public Utilities Commission. Public Utilities did not involve housing so much.

I wrote the taxi ordinance for the County at the time; we administered the County taxi cab ordinance.

We took the phone company C & P to court – beat the State Corporation Commission for the first time in 50 years when they granted an increase to C & P Telephone Company which they had decided on before the public hearing. They actually had the announcement prepared. When I was chair of the Public Utilities Commission and we had a young attorney who had just started with the County's attorney's office and he was representing us and we had, we appealed the matter to the State Supreme Court and won.

Linda: That was quite a coup.

Carl: I thought so and I thought this guy was so good so that I later hired him to work for me at the National Association of Home Builders. We put him in charge of state and local matters and I was in charge of all Federal and state and local legislative sort of related issues. Dwayne Sorrels is his name. He's no longer in this area.

But housing is really been what I have been interested in and what I'm still interested in. On the Planning commission I use to be a bit of a burr in the sides of developers whom I know how they think as I use to represent them

and I still represent them. Not here in the county but elsewhere around the Country.

To meet an obligation to try to provide housing for people when you had a requirement that you had a certain percentage of your units that had to be for lower or moderate income persons you can stick it back in the corner with the storm water drainage pond. You try to put a thread throughout the community or up front in the community. Had a big fight on that in this immediate area right here these houses are built – just to the west here of the or - surrounding, in fact wrapping around this office and the fire station; and I think we ultimately fairly well prevailed on that. It's been some years now and I would have to go back and assess that – that was a significant issue as to whether and how this development would be improved.

Linda: So that prior to that time they would just put the housing in the worse location.

Carl: Well that was the tendency to get it out of site out of mind and that's always been a problem, at any rate, of trying to integrate people in a community racially and ethnically as well as economically. It's an ongoing battle. I think that the County has done a reasonably good job, it could do a better job but that was one of the things that I tried to be most outspoken about when I served on the Planning Commission.

Linda: Talk a little bit more about how congestion here in Fairfax County and how your idea of cut thrus as they are known would have probably helped that.

Carl: Well, if you want to go from one subdivision to another and I saw this most vividly in the McLean, over in the Vienna area – Oakton which is in Providence District and part of my responsibility. You could see the house of your neighbor but you had to go out and around and make about a 2 mile trip by way of Route 123 to get to your neighbor's house. And that contributed to the congestion on Route 123. Whereas if you wanted to visit your neighbor and take your kids over there or something like that there is no reason you have to go out – there is a problem if a road goes

thru that someone who doesn't belong in that neighborhood might use that road to go from here to there. But they are public streets they are not private streets. When I was on the Planning Commission I resisted the provision of private streets as much as I could. I really think it is the responsibility of government to provide means for citizens to get from here to there.

Yeah, I didn't succeed in all cases. I succeeded more in Providence District than I did in other parts of the County where there is not that much of a concern about that. There wasn't anyway.

So I notice – I don't know if you have ever been to Los Angeles but you can drive from Northeastern Los Angeles down through the City all the way down to Long Beach almost on one road, one street. Now that's about a 15 or 20 mile stretch or longer, I never tried it. And they have all their freeways out there and that's where they try to focus the commuter traffic. I had not realized that and I have a son that lives out in the Los Angeles area and we visit them frequently. So I have learned a little bit about how that area is designed I was impressed by that fact that the same street goes on and on and on. We here – the same street goes on and on and on but the same street was here in 1930, 1940, 1950; that's not completely true because we have I66 which is new and the Fairfax County Parkway is new. But beyond that there is very little arterial, newly constructed arterial streets so everything is focused on those relatively few number of arterials. They have to serve not only arterial purposes that is people going from a distance; but also people going to a neighborhood.

I can't get out of my neighborhood which consists of 360 some homes. I can't go from there to someplace else easily. I have to get out on one of the major streets. And to me that's – I use Shreve Road - Shreve Road was there when I was growing up. My father use to take us out there and we would get sand out of the creek bank out there off of Shreve Road out about where it would of, where it was realigned to accommodate the beltway. But that's still there – I mean this was realigned and that was because of the beltway. Idlewood Road that was there 50 years ago; and

it's there now but you have to get on Idlewood or Shreve Road or Route 7 or one of these streets to accommodate and expedient growth in traffic. I mean this Merrifield area nearby here is – it was nothing – I mean there was the Lee Highway Arlington Boulevard Drive In out here and that was about it.

I'm not against development. Development I think has to be accommodated reasonably; to accommodate the needs of people. But you need I think to be more sensible about the way you go about accommodating that. One of the ways I think is not to focus all your traffic onto a few arterial streets. I also think the County ought to run the streets; I don't think the state should. When I was chairman of the Providence District Council back in the 1960's. I took on that as a task and got nowhere. I kept being told that we couldn't afford it. Well I really think that a jurisdiction of a million people ought to have control of its' own streets. You should not depend upon the state to pave them, and stripe them, to maintain them on a regular basis. It's just that I think it doesn't make sense and every politician I talk to disagrees with me because of the anticipated extra costs.

I think, I'm not sure that extra cost is as realistic as it's purported to be, because the States spending money. Maybe there's not enough money to go to the – if you took that proportion and gave it to the County there's not enough that makes my case – we don't have enough money spent on maintaining our own streets. We're an urban jurisdiction we're not a cow county anymore. We have more people than the state of Delaware for instance; where I happen to have a summer home. We have more people or almost as many people as Rhode Island has. And we are small compared to New York or to Los Angeles or Chicago but we are a major, major, major urban jurisdiction yet we still can't seem to accommodate ourselves to all of that. We still think we live in the country and I do have country parts of me we do have rural, fairly rural parts of the County; but they are getting fewer and fewer.

Linda: How about let's switch over to hobbies. What kind of things do you do.

Carl: Nothing.

Linda: Your work is your hobby.

Carl: If you ask my wife she would say yes.

Carl: I like to read, I don't even get much chance to read. I don't play golf; I gave that up some years ago. I never played tennis, growing up in Falls Church there was not place to play tennis; to learn how to play tennis. We didn't have any parks or playgrounds or anything like that in this area. If you belonged to a County Club of which there was two; that was fine but we couldn't afford to. I am the oldest of nine children so we couldn't afford to belong to any Country Clubs. So I don't do that and that's about it.

Linda: Did your siblings stay in the area?

Carl: Most of them are still here. I have one sister in New Jersey and all the rest are in this the greater area. Several of them I have two a brother and sister in Annapolis; we just before I got out of college my parents got a summer home in a community known as Sherwood Forrest on the Severn River outside of Annapolis so that's sort of a second home to the family down there. So I said I have a brother and a sister down there and a couple of brothers here in Northern Virginia; one in Alexandria and one in Arlington. I'm the only one that stayed in Falls Church though.

Linda: Tell me about your civic association or homeowners association.

Carl: Well, the Falls Hills Civic Association, I was its president at one time and served on the board on two occasions; one for 9 years and one for 3 years. I was its representative to the Federation of Civic Associations for many, many years. I'm not active in it now.

Civic Associations seem to thrive when there is controversy and if there is no controversy the only interest in them are people who frequent that's their release to be involved in something and there's nothing wrong with that. But when I was president 1968, we had a spade of juvenile depredation and we, I had a meeting of the community at the Shreve Road Elementary School, which is the nearest to us. We had a tremendous turn out and one of the things I proposed is we put up street lights. You would have thought that I had thrown a bucket of cold water on the whole thing about wanting street lights. We now have street lights to some extent in Falls Hill which is part of becoming recognized, urbanized. But one of the residents said well I don't want street lights I like to lie in the backyard and look at the stars with my son. I don't think street lights would have affected that but we got over that problem.

Linda: And I think you mentioned there are 400 homes?

Carl: There are 300 in Falls Hill approximately. It was build in the late 1950's early 1960's, mostly by one developer Ketler Brothers. But there is another developer of about 50 homes. And then there are some that were built, maybe about a dozen houses that were built in the early to mid 1950's. But the bulk of it was built by Ketler Brothers in 1959 to 1964, 63 I guess.

Linda: Are there any stories, interesting fun stories that you have from growing up here in the area or your work here; that you would like to share.

Carl: I got something from the Planning commission a few days ago and email saying that they are celebrating, I think, the 70th Anniversary of the Planning commission here in Fairfax. That startled me that it goes back that far.

But asking for stories and I was thinking of one where we had a very late meeting one night until about 3 O'clock in the morning. So I got, so I left and went over and go on I66. And half way between Route 123 and Nutley it came to a stop and we sat there for over a half hour because the state

was doing something on the road. It was the most (laugh) it really was the - And there was another Commissioner John Beyers who's recently resigned, retired I think. He's from the Mount Vernon area; he's on I66 to get on the beltway to go back down to the Mount Vernon area. I fortunately, I just remember sitting there nothing you could do at 3 O'clock in the morning. I don't know what they were doing but we put in a lot of long hours on the Planning Commission which is why I did not - which is why I declined another term. Which Linda Smyth becoming my replacement and now she is the Supervisor. So interesting how things go. But I use to come out from Washington on the - to the meetings and that trip out I66 around 7 or 7:30pm is frequently a deadly trip if you have ever taken it. Occasionally I have to take it for other reasons and I remember why I didn't like it.

Linda: That's right I don't think we mentioned that your offices are in Washington, D.C.

Carl: Downtown Washington. I remember when I first started serving on the Public Utilities Commission in the mid 1960's. I use to go out - I use to travel out to meetings and go out to Board hearings and things like that for matters; and I66 had just opened and it was deserted. It did not run, it terminated at the beltway, at that time. It wasn't extended all the way until the early 1980's, all the way into Washington. But I could just, you'd be 10:30 or 11:00 O'clock at night - I'd be one of the only cars. I must say I probably exceeded the speed limits substantially because there wasn't anybody around. That's an indication; you can't get on I66 around that time now it's still very crowded 10 or 11 O'clock at night. But again there wasn't much west of there.

We were still meeting; the Board of Supervisors was still meeting, in the old Court House. Not in the Massey Building but in the Courthouse. They had a hearing and So that's - you just stop to think about it that Court House - I remember my father taking me out there when I was a kid and showing me the postings. He was not a lawyer but he was interested in things like that.

You know they have where the Court where somebody is divorcing somebody; or somebody is suing somebody or there is a judgment against somebody or something like that. That was the Court House in which things transpired. That's where the Public Utilities Commission met in its first couple of years. We then moved back to Fairfax City, City Hall and we had our meetings there for a while. We also met in the Massey building when it opened, and, but that is in a ways it is amazing to see the growth that has occurred, it truly is. I'm sort of rambling but I

Linda: No, that's good you have seen it from such an early period you know.

Carl: Ah, it doesn't seem to me I'm an old timer. (Laughing) I guess I am. There are other people around longer than I but not that many around any longer than I, I guess. Now, what boggled my mind is that I am coming up to my 50th reunion from law school this summer or fall. I went right into practice right out of law school; I had taken and passed the bar exam. I had 3 children and I had to start making money to pay for them. In fact my third child was born, our third child was born a month after I finished law school and I got sworn in while my wife was still in the hospital. So I was just trying to think of – I use to go horseback riding up in this area.

Linda: Remember the name of the stable?

Carl: They weren't stables – these are people's personal horses.

Linda: Personal horses.

Carl: There wasn't such thing as stables I'm sorry. These were people's personal horses. There weren't any such things as stables. I don't know if they had stables anywhere you know where poor people could rent a horse. No, I don't remember if somebody had a few horses. I remember at Broad Street and West Street in West Falls Church there was a family named Martin who owned the house on the corner where the Sunoco station is now and they had about an acre or so and they had a horse. The horse got out and got hit by a car and I saw the horse shot, that was put away.

There were a lot, as I said there were a lot of people who had horses in town. Outside of town there were open areas but these people had an acre or three quarters of an acre. We had three quarters of an acre as I said and we could have kept a horse on it. But my mother would never put up with a horse; the kids were enough for her.

The thing I find interesting is where I grew up on Broad Street in Falls Church, they've just, my father sold the property to ESSO, no it wasn't Exxon it was still ESSO in those days and they put a gas station up there. That became a garage and I use to get my car inspected there sometimes in the past it got torn down a couple years ago and they just about finished an apartment project going in on that property. And I have taken some pictures of it – those are being developed. But that area sat undeveloped for a long time. What we called the Anderson's field which is the area just west of there to Pennsylvania Avenue along Broad Street. All of a sudden, not all of a sudden but over the last three years they sprung up – several hundred rental units on this large field where I use to play baseball.

My younger brother set a fire once; he's now a respected doctor. There's one house still left there and it's called Bedo's, I don't know if you have ever heard of the name; they are a leather repair and a shoe repair (412 West Broad Street). They are sort of towered over by these apartment buildings and they wouldn't sell. And there use to be when I was growing up that was right next to our house and they were people named Britain who lived there and he was a bus driver. I find it somewhat interesting you probably wouldn't find a bus driver living in a setting of that nature today.

But we had – it's interesting Falls Church we had black families next door to us, and across the street from us. We had very wealthy families in the same neighborhood and relatively modest income families, including this bus driver as it was – they had no children so – they had a dog. Every now and then a baseball would go up against their house and they didn't like that. We had an interesting eclectic arrangement, living arrangement in Falls Church. It's become more stratified in the last several decades then it was in those days.

Linda: Tinner Hill

Carl: Tinner Hill is about a half a mile or three quarters of a mile from. That was a black community. But elsewhere in the town there was two or three houses here and there occupied by blacks. Not substantially but I mean they were scattered about and they of course went to their own segregated schools. One of the – the man who lived next to us was Reverend Coster and he was pastor of a church on Annandale Road between Ford Avenue and Route 50 off the Boulevard, Old Lee Boulevard. He had children about my age a boy and a girl and we played with them. Having come from Philadelphia we didn't have quite that same background as to react in a prejudice sort of fashion. Not that Philadelphians are non prejudice because they are when they get too many blacks around unfortunately. That's been my observation.

But it was, I'm just trying to think of some – we use to have a large peach grove out Route 7 west of Falls Church where there is an apartment building now called Peach something else or other. It is named after what had been there a large orchard – peach orchard there. I remember when there use to be a peach orchard on Dunn Loring Road became Gallows Road where we use to buy fruit, more apples than peaches – between Route 7 and Idlewood Road.

And Vienna I remember had that old one car police force and it was a Kaiser. When I was a young man and just started to drive you know if you saw him at one end of town you wouldn't run into him at the other end of town on Maple Street.

Vienna interestingly was a developed community not as broad as it is today of course. But it, Maple Avenue was – had big trees all along it and this really came from the railroad, Washington and Old Dominion Railroad to a great extent cause it was one of the stops, major stops on the railroad.

McLean on the other hand was not very developed it had been served by a street car that ran out to Great Falls. I don't remember that though; that was taken out in the late 1930's before I came here. But Old Dominion

Drive is the right of way of the street car that ran out to Great Falls and you will notice that it is a straight shot. There use to be a street car that paralleled the Old Dominion Railroad too came out in Fairfax County through Falls Church and you can still in some places see the raised bed on which it was. That came, or spun off somewhere off of and came out to Oakton. There are areas in Oakton that were serviced. Again these were before my time, but when I served on the Planning Commission I learned some of this background that I did not know about. Now we are talking about restoring street cars in the area.

Linda: Yes.

Carl: Perhaps we will because I paid almost 60 dollars to fill my tank in my car up yesterday, no two days ago. Its mind boggling, I mean I use to spend 5 dollars on a tank to drive a week on.

Linda: Yes, gasoline has gone up. What advice would you give to people who would be moving to Fairfax County in the future?

Carl: Be cognizant of the fact that there may be people that want to come after you; and they may need to be housed. And you can't really deny them entry because you weren't denied entry.

I use to always tell people on the Planning Commission that I wasn't necessarily happy when you all came, but you are here and you took my urban, my rural community wide with fields and places where I use to shoot, I use to shoot squirrels where I live now when I was a kid. I use to shoot squirrels next to where City Hall is in Falls Church. My mother never would cook them but a friend would and he had the rifles. I wasn't allowed to have a rifle. But that's all gone by the boards now. So you have to recognize that other people will like to live here too. It doesn't mean that you have to accept inappropriate development; but you have to accept the fact that we are a growing urban community and we are going to continue to grow. That's why I think it is so important that Tyson's has an underground rather than an above ground rapid transit.

Linda: And you are talking about the new controversy.

Carl: Yes, yes, I think that, I think that it is penny wise and pound foolish of the people at the mass transit operation. I helped write that legislation originally in the sixties and was involved in first establishing it because it went into HUD originally or the Housing Administration PHA (Public Housing Administration) which preceded HUD. So I was involved to some extent in that legislation. I was a great strong advocate for bringing mass transit out here to Fairfax when I served on the – I was a member of the Federation of Civic Associations. We got involved deeply in those issues. I guess they still do. I'm not involved now although I do occasionally go to their dinners when they honor somebody. But just be accepting; and be accepting of people of different incomes.

I really am opposed to gated communities for instance. You didn't see any developed in Providence when I was on the Planning Commission. Whether there are any now or not I don't know; but I just think that's inappropriate.

Linda: Well, I thank you for this interview; is there anything I have forgotten to ask you about that you would like to share?

Carl: Well, in looking over your various things – where did you shop for clothes, groceries and appliances? Well that's interesting – there were no department stores out here except for Penney's and the Sears in Clarendon. We'd go in town to Hecht's or Woodies or the Palais Royal which was bought by Woodies in the forties. There were some others but we never went to them. There was Kanns. And then they started moving out this way; Kanns opened in Arlington there's no longer being. Hecht's opened Parkington in Arlington it's no longer being; it's now Macy's.

And then Seven Corners got developed and that was quite a thing. I think it was about oh, 1957 or so; I was living in Tyler Gardens. I was living in an apartment in Falls Church which was then Tyler Gardens and now Tinner

Hill. At that time I remember my first experience with air conditioning was at the Hecht's in Washington; it felt so nice.

Grocery shopping – I worked at Safeway, the one in East Falls Church which is now where a bank is and within the city. I worked at the one in Westover in Arlington and the two of them together would not be big enough to support a modern day super market. It's amazing what's happened. We use to shop at the, what you would almost call country stores in Falls Church. Grocery stores, one run by a family named Bowers who I went to school with their children and they have a cheese shop at the Eastern Market in Washington D.C., still which was destroyed in the fire there a couple of years ago.

There was no such thing as big box stores in those days anywhere's I guess and certainly not out here. But we had a variety of merchants, Arlington County being more developed sooner than Fairfax; had a larger supply, a broader supply of shopping than we had out here. We had nothing out here really. We had Brown's Hardware which is still in Falls Church. Then we got a place developed in West Falls Church called the Rust Manor Shopping Center, still there, the structure is still there. I don't know what they call it now. The Merrifield had nothing as I mentioned before. McLean had very little; there was a pool hall, a volunteer fire department, a gas station and a grocery store or two and that was it.

Vienna was more sophisticatedly developed because it had been an established town. But it didn't take long for all this to change in the late forties and the fifties; the area boomed, truly boomed.

Linda: What were your childhood chores?

Carl: Well I use to come home everyday and hang the laundry up my mother. (Laughing)

Linda: Oh, that's wonderful.

Carl: I'm not sure I was pleased about doing it. We didn't have a dryer.

Linda: Clothes pins?

Carl: Yes, clothes pins; as I said we had a large yard and so and we had a lot of laundry because we had a lot of kids.

Linda: My husband says today that sheets are not the same as when you hung them up outside – that fresh air

Carl: No, they are not. They have been trying to duplicate that with all these things you throw in with them ever since that. But we ah, we had a clothes tree when we first moved here to Falls Church and it disappeared, my wife wasn't interested in that outside if she could avoid it.

Linda: A clothes tree was a unit that had a pole that came up and opened like an umbrella.

Carl: Right, exactly, exactly, and so you had four sides or five sides and you had the lines three or four on each side going from the outside to the inside and that was a very common thing I don't think we have it anymore I think we got rid of it.

Linda: I can remember those and you could take them down so they weren't unsightly in the yard when you weren't drying your clothes.

Carl: How did your family celebrate holidays? Well we went to Philadelphia frequently because that's where my parents were from so we went up to see our relatives up there.

Linda: I am going to stop you there and we will take a short break.

[Pause in recording]

Linda: This is part two of the interview for the Providence Perspective with Carl Coan.

Carl: We would go into the Mall for the fourth of July and watch the fireworks. We would go into town, Washington, D.C., and occasionally visit some concerts – at the Watergate which was a stage that floated on the Potomac next to the Lincoln Memorial. And ah we did not have air-conditioning and the summers got very hot here, they still do. So it was not infrequently that we'd go to a place like Hanes Point in Washington. There were no venues like that here in Northern Virginia at that time. But wide open spaces that were park like, we had ah parks were an unknown pretty much here in Fairfax and Northern Virginia; at least when I was growing up. You know, we started the Park Authority and we've done a lot of good things in that area but that didn't really get underway in my recollection until the mid fifties or so.

We would take a lot of drives out in the country. And um I remember my grandfather who was a very interesting person; he was born in Scotland to a mother who had come to Scotland from South Carolina as a child just before the Civil War broke out; stayed there and got married there and had ancestors, who were my ancestors the Livingstons who signed the Declaration of Independence. But he was an immigrant in a fashion you know, I guess he was an American citizen from birth because his mother was an American citizen; his father was a Scotchman.

Linda: That was quite something for her to go from here to there in that time.

Carl: Well this family did not sympathize with the slavery issues even though they lived in South Carolina. They came back to South Carolina then moved to Philadelphia. But we use to take drives into the country with him and he would insist on stopping at every Battlefield marker that we saw. He was and featured himself in a story in the fashion he wrote. He was a reporter at one time and wrote detective stories for pulp magazines.

Linda: Oh, and his name.

Carl: MacDonald, William MacDonald. And so we'd, I learned a lot about the Civil War history as a kid driving out into the country in Virginia. We did have these and we still have these roadside markers. We didn't have, didn't have interstates in those days and so everyone wasn't going at sixty or seventy miles an hour. You had a two lane road which maybe you couldn't do fifty or fifty-five on but more likely maybe did forty five or so. And so you could stop and read a marker that said so and so and such and such battle took place here.

That way we got to see a lot more of the state west of here predominantly then I suspect kids do today. We didn't have television of course, we didn't have Nintendo. We had to entertain; we had to do things to be entertained we just couldn't sit around and not do something. I love to read so I use to, I use to secrete myself out of the sight of my mother and try to read. I think I read most of the books for children in the Falls Church Library, when I was a kid; they would let me read some they wouldn't let me read.

We use to go to the movies, twelve cents admission to go to the movies.

Linda: The State Theatre.

Carl: The State Theatre and also the Lee Theatre which was down in East Falls Church; they had serials and cowboy pictures and things like that. So frequently on a Saturday I and my next younger sister and one or two of our friends would walk the mile or so from our house in the center of Falls Church City to East Falls Church down Little Falls Street. East Falls Church had a little shopping area there; it was all wiped out by 1966. 1966 wiped out much of the surroundings of my childhood. I mean it really has – did so.

But um – I use to ride my bike. Several times I rode out to Great Falls, into town once or twice. By that I mean Washington, D.C., and that was twelve or fifteen miles or more.

There were no swimming pools out here except at the Country Clubs. There was one in Alexandria; but Alexandria is a long ways. It's closer to go to Washington then to Alexandria. So I didn't learn to swim really until I

was in High School. And I learned to swim at East Potomac Pool Park at Hanes Point. I use to take the bus to the Pentagon, change buses at the Pentagon and take a bus into town. In those days anyone could walk into the Pentagon and wander around the shopping mall there. We weren't so up tight about security in those days. We are truly obsessively up tight.

Movies were a big thing. That was the personal entertainment. We got television I guess when I was about thirteen years old or something or fourteen; the late forties. But we weren't allowed to watch it that much.

I played a lot of baseball, a little bit of football, as I said no, a little bit of basketball. We use to come out when we were in high school we would come out to Fairfax High School, the old Fairfax High School which is now Paul Pius the Sixth and we knew a window that could be opened in the Gym. And we'd but the small one of us up there and climb up and open this up high window and go in and then go down and he would open the door. So we'd go out there on Sunday and play basketball but otherwise there was no place to play basketball.

What were my childhood chores? Well I told you I hung out the wash; I also cut the grass. I at my father's instigation acquired a power mower right after the second World War; which was a self propelled and I walked all over Falls Church cutting peoples grass.

Linda: What did you charge for that?

Carl: Oh, I don't know, shoot I was – not much I know. I got some large lots – you know where the State Theatre is across the street from it is the Kaiser Clinic and that was all one lot pretty much at that time. And I can remember I cut all the grass on that lot. And I'd deliver newspapers from the time I was nine until I was in college.

Linda: Which newspapers?

Carl: On, started with the Washington Daily News and then the Star, the Washington Star for a while the Evening Star and even did the Times Herald for a little while. But the predominate paper that I delivered was the

Washington Post. I had a route across the street from me in Tyler Gardens the apartment development across the street from our house. We had 120 or so papers in a tight area and my brother had the other half of it, younger brother Alfton Lee. And so it was good money and so I worked at it until I was a freshman in college. I was invited to leave I didn't quite make it early enough for some people and so I felt I was a little old to be delivering newspapers – as a freshman in college.

I also collected old newspapers during the Korean War. Newspapers sold for a dollar a pound. I'd get a big bunch of it and rent a truck drive that truck in Washington to a junk yard and sell it. Then that helped to pay some of my college. I paid my own college tuition. Fortunately I was on half a scholarship at Georgetown so that helped. Newspaper is no where near a dollar a pound today, just think of the economics of that.

But talk about war and scarcities. I got my first bicycle when I was nine years old when I got this paper route which covered about half of Falls Church for delivery of about 26 papers. Washington Daily News was not the most popular paper in town. And to get that bicycle I had to get a permit from the office of price administration. It was during the Second World War and I bought a second hand bicycle from our milkman. But I had to go to the OPA which was in the old Masonic temple on Broad Street toward the center of town. The building's not there anymore. Actually it was the Odd Fellows Hall – not a Masonic Temple. I had to stand in line with my father and go through this rigmarole in order to buy a bicycle. Things were in short supply in those days. I'll never forget being sent to get some napkins from one of these little stores in the center of Falls Church and they said they didn't have any napkins and my mother had sent me and I said well what are those things up there it says napkins. Well they were sanitary napkins.

Linda: Oh, laughing.

Carl: The whole place broke out in guffaws.

Linda: Oh, how funny.

Carl: I didn't know the difference at the time. But things were in short supply. We had to have ration stamps and we had a large vegetable garden which I serviced. I raised tomatoes and sold tomatoes; I use to put tomatoes on a wagon and haul it all around Falls Church with a little baby scale and sell them for fifteen cents a pound. I paid my own way since I was nine years old pretty much.

Linda: That's wonderful; so the depression and World War II.

Carl: Well the depression didn't really affect, the depression was over World War II, was going when we came here. But the depression had affected my father – he lost a job in the middle of the thirties. He had been a track star in college; he held the mile record, National Record the collegiate mile record. And because of that he was able to get a job selling insurance when he graduated from college in 1932. “He was really lucky” quote unquote. He progressed from there to selling something else and then works for the state of Pennsylvania and then politics changed and he was a Democrat and the Republicans came in and he was out of a job; and we had a very Christmas I remember 1937 or 1938. He then got a job with WPA and he was an economist and a statistician and wound up with the Census Bureau. So, this experience really influenced a lot of things.

Linda: Did he commute from here to the Census Bureau?

Carl: Yes, he did but the Census Bureau was originally was in downtown on New York Avenue just west of the White House. But they moved out to Suitland in the, oh right after the war I guess. There were several people who worked at the Census Bureau who lived in Falls Church and they commuted, they carpooled. In fact he bought his house from the person, our house in Falls Church he bought from his retiring boss at the Census Bureau. Because he worked down here for a year before we moved down. I had an aunt who lived in Rockville, my mother's aunt and so he lived with them and then he would come home on the weekends on the train. I don't think we had a car in those days that ran very well.

I'll never forget we got our first car after the Second World War and it was a big thing. They got a new Plymouth and it was about I guess it was 1946.

And that was a big celebration because our previous car had been a 1934 or 1935 Chevrolet that didn't run very well and with nine children you couldn't get them in.

Linda: Now did you all fit in that Plymouth?

Carl: Not very well. We later got a big station wagon type vehicle called Desoto Suburban. It had three rows of seats that we could get in there, the children; we traveled all over the country in it.

He developed the first census of housing when he, my father and when he was there in the 1950 census, for the 1950 census full scale. They did a little bit of exploration in the 1940 census but they did it full scale in the 1950's. As a result we took several trips with him to Miami and Boston and Madison, Wisconsin in conjunction with overseeing and setting up that census. But he then became, ultimately went to the Congress, went to the staff of the Senate Patent Committee and became Staff Director of the Housing Sub Committee. I guess that's how I got into housing; though my grandfather, my mother's father, William MacDonald had been in the Real Estate business. He got wiped out in the depression as many people did; so, that's how I got into or that helped me get into housing. He contacted people who interviewed me and I got a job just right out of law school. And I guess that may not be considered appropriate but it happens.

Linda: Yes.

Carl: But here I am fifty years later still in housing.

Linda: Well you have done an awful lot in your personal life and your career and I appreciate this interview.

Carl: Oh, let me tell you another story.

Linda: Okay.

Carl: We had an amusement park called Glen Echo; it's still here in a fashion. But it's not an amusement park. During the War I will never forget

I went once with a friend and his parents. They weren't suppose to be driving for non-essential purposes so we drove into Washington across chain bridge, parked the car and picked up the street car which ran from downtown Washington out to Glen Echo.

Linda: I understand that ride was really

Carl: It was a very interesting ride I really enjoyed it.

Linda: as good as the roller coaster ride.

Carl: Well not quite though one time I did stay out to the – I had been out there with a group of newspaper carriers or something and I stayed on and I rode the roller coaster maybe a dozen or two dozen times. My money ran out and I just had enough to get back into – to take the street car back into Washington. But then I didn't have enough money to take the bus from Georgetown down to home. I went along M Street begging money from people to get me the fifteen or twenty cents I needed to catch a bus to come home on.

I almost drown in the pool at Glen Echo in the graduation of – on my graduation from the eighth grade and that's when I realized I didn't really know how to swim. That's when I started taking swimming lessons at East Potomac Park in Washington and I swam on the swim team there the next year. But that was a scary thing. I went in the diving pool, someone said you can and I don't know why I did it but I did it; I was thirteen years old and you do foolish things I guess when you are thirteen years old. But Glen Echo was a very interesting place. I had a lot of good times there, a lot of people did but the problem was it was segregated – no blacks. And that became a cause Colebee in later years.

We had another amusement park called Marshall Hall down in Charles County, Maryland and you could drive to it but most people took the boat. They took the boat off the southeast waterfront and rode down to Marshall Hall and took people over to Mount Vernon and then would pick you up on the way back. And if you missed the boat you were in trouble because you were no way you could get home. There were no buses no nothing like

that down there. It was not as comprehensive as Glen Echo but it was an interesting place to go.

Linda: They use to have jousting there on some occasions at Marshall Hall.

Carl: Yes, yes I never saw that but I know of it, I've read about it. So these are the things we did fifty years ago, forty years ago.

Linda: Great.

Carl: I could probably sit here all day and remember things but you've got things to do.

Linda: We can always add to this.

Carl: You've got things to do and I have a law practice to get back to.

Linda: Thank you.